REMARKS

BY

WILLIAM H. WEBSTER

BEFORE THE

MID-AMERICA COMMITTEE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 17, 1988

Thank you very much, Bob.* I like your sources. It's great to be here in Chicago, but I must ask one question. When I spoke in Phoenix last January, the city was alive with a great event -- the St. Louis Cardinal football team was moving to Phoenix. And now I come here to Chicago thinking there is always baseball, but what have you done to my Cardinals? There's always the Baltimore Orioles to go back and root for, but their performance is not as good as my home team's.

As Bob suggested, after our discussion is ended, I'll take as many questions as we have time to answer. It has been an extraordinary year for me for all kinds of obvious reasons, but also because I cannot remember, in the 10 years that I have been in Washington, a year in which more things were going on that affected the U.S. in terms of our national security and our foreign relations -- the arms control initiatives; the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; all the problems in Central America -- El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama; even Haiti; the great difficulties we encountered in the Persian Gulf and how well I think we've been handling those situations; other Third World conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, and Cambodia; the emergence of the People's Republic of China in the area of munitions delivery systems. A whole range of issues. It has been a great challenge to the Intelligence Community to stay up with them. And I must confess that I find myself a little breathless as we go into the current year. The arms control treaty, the signing of the INF treaty, and discussions about the START treaty are still ahead of us.

*Bob Southern, managing partner of the Chicago law firm of Mayer, Brown, and Platt.

My good friend, General Vernon Walters, former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and now our Ambassador to the United Nations, describes a view held by many in this country about intelligence. "Americans," he observed, "have always had an ambivalent attitude toward intelligence. When they feel threatened, they want a lot of it, and when they don't, they tend to regard the whole thing as somewhat immoral." I think his observation is right on the mark.

On the plane coming down this morning, Bill Baker showed me a recent survey that suggested to me that right now the American people want a whole lot of intelligence. Our job is to provide a whole lot of intelligence under circumstances that the American people do not regard as immoral.

Americans have had a lot to say about intelligence over the past year. The Iran-Contra affair, painful as it may have been, I think exemplifies the extent to which the formation of foreign policy implicates so many agencies of our government, including Congress. I'd like to talk this afternoon about the role, as I see it, the CIA plays in supporting and implementing foreign policy -- which I want to emphasize is not the same as making foreign policy. I also want to discuss the changing nature of congressional oversight, and the importance of building trust in the Central Intelligence Agency's mission. Americans, in my view, need to believe that this Agency and other government agencies are responsive, accountable, and not above the law.

Our primary role at CIA is to provide support to our nation's policymakers. We do this by providing intelligence that is useful, timely, and objective.

Today our government depends heavily on useful, accurate intelligence: intelligence to formulate and implement our foreign policy, intelligence to verify the arms agreements that we have signed, and intelligence to understand both the military intentions and the capabilities of our adversaries. Intelligence and verification are now almost one and the same in the minds of the policymakers and the Hill. I think they will become a central focus for discussion, as the debate continues on how much more arms control we can, with confidence, agree upon with the Soviets.

Intelligence has to be timely. Soon after I came on board in May of last year, I took Bobby Inman's advice and visited NORAD in Colorado Springs in the Cheyenne Mountains. Later, I went on to the SAC Headquarters in Omaha. Just a couple of weeks ago, I visited our fleet in Norfolk and went aboard a nuclear submarine and an aircraft carrier, the John F. Kennedy. You can't visit these places without realizing how important timely intelligence is in terms of our national security. Given the speed at which nuclear missiles are now capable of traveling, when we think in terms of survival warnings, we are not thinking in terms of weeks or days, but in terms of hours or even minutes.

But as important as being useful and timely, the kind of intelligence we are producing has to be produced in an objective way. This is one of the problems we've experienced in the past. The Director of Central Intelligence and the people who analyze information must be seen as giving their best estimates, and not as "cooking the books," or attempting to shape or influence policy, but providing the policymakers with the kind of information that they can use to make wise decisions for our country.

Because the quality and objectivity of the intelligence we provide is so important, I have taken a number of steps to be sure that the Intelligence Community preserves its objectivity and protects its integrity. We have and will continue to "tell it like it is," avoiding bias as much as we can. On the other side of the coin, some of the policymakers may not like the message they hear from us. Indeed, that is not entirely unusual, especially if they have a different point of view, and more especially if they have already made up their minds or taken some action before they asked for or received our estimates of the consequences of those actions.

It is very important in the implementation of foreign policy that we think beyond the first step. In a number of the areas where we have received our greatest criticism as an Administration, I think it is because we have taken reactive moves and found ourselves in some sort of soup and then have worked mightily to get ourselves out of the soup. I think that we can do a better job of trying to look out in front of the problem, if the policymakers as consumers will make better use of the information that is available to them. That's a sermon that I preach. And I also preach that when we do supply it to them, they can use it in any way they want. They can use it in whole or in part. They can file it, tear it up, or throw it in the wastebasket, but the one thing they may not do is change it. In that way, I protect the objectivity and the integrity of our analysts, who are scholars and gifted public servants. They do not want their work to be manipulated to achieve an already determined result. I think we are making great progress in this area.

I think this kind of insistence on objectivity may, in the end, be one of the most significant contributions that I could make in galvanizing a cohesive

Intelligence Community without compromising the integrity of the individual analysts or program managers.

In addition to providing intelligence that is useful, timely, and objective, the CIA plays a role in implementing foreign policy. This is done through its covert action programs. Covert capability, essential, in my opinion, to our foreign policy, provides needed support for liberation movements, often provides support to governments that we favor, and allows us to work in close collaboration with those governments who do not wish, for legitimate reasons of their own, to have the role of the United States publicly known. They are usually political reasons, but they are valid ones. Although covert actions traditionally claim only a very small portion of the Intelligence Community's resources -- less than three percent -- they probably account for about 90 percent of our publicity. I am working on that, but I don't expect that I'll have a quick solution for it. We must have covert capability. There are often situations in which diplomacy is not enough -- situations in which those with whom we are working cannot do their job with diplomacy alone. They need our help, and they need it through covert action.

The process of getting a covert action approved is one that I could give another talk about, but I'll just summarize it very quickly because I think it is very important. This is not CIA foreign policy; this is the foreign policy of the United States -- the objectives as stated by the Secretary of State and approved by the President. We are often asked by the Department of State to help them do a job or to plan something in which it is obvious that covert capability is going to be required, whether it be political assistance, training, or simply giving advice.

Before I let a proposal go forward, it is reviewed inside the CIA by a group that we call the CARG, the Covert Action Review Group. This group is very similar to the one that I used at the FBI. The proposal is examined, not only in terms of things that you as executives would anticipate -- the cost, whether it can be done, whether it is efficient, and the bottom-line question -- whether it will work. But we also ask whether or not this activity is consistent with the overt foreign policy of our country. If you think back to the Iran-Contra affair, you can see the importance of this consistency. We also ask whether it will make sense to the American people when it becomes public, as it almost invariably does. The proposal for a covert action program then goes on to a series of coordinating groups, and finally to the National Security Council which must recommend to the President that he adopt a finding in writing. This finding, in turn, goes to the intelligence oversight committees of the House and Senate.

At each of these steps, I encourage the individuals involved to discuss the question of whether or not the proposed action makes sense as well as whether or not it will work and whether or not it is consistent with American values and foreign policy. I hope in this way that the CIA will never again be, if we ever have been, thought of as the outfit with the black bag and the dirty tricks. What we do is useful and necessary, but it has to be done in a principled way and with guidelines that we can say have the full support of the senior policymakers of this country.

Congress is very much interested in what the CIA does. Not long ago, I addressed a group of retired foreign intelligence officers in Washington, and they recalled the days when no classified papers went to the Hill at all, not

to either branch of Congress. The only classified briefings to congressional committees were given by the Director himself, or with the Director present. At one time, the Senate Appropriations Committee had one cleared staffer, the House Appropriations Committee one or two. Today, four congressional committees closely examine the Agency's activities, and, I guess you know from your own experience, the number of individuals who see classified material far exceeds that by a considerable margin.

Fifteen years ago, the CIA gave 175 briefings to Congress. Last year, we gave over 1,000 briefings on a variety of topics. These topics included arms control, Soviet weapons, the Persian Gulf situation, the various conflicts in Central America, and even, and I think importantly, the spread of AIDS in Africa. In the last year, the CIA sent over 5,000 intelligence reports to Congress.

In addition to briefings and papers, there is also open testimony and testimony in closed session. I was up there earlier this week for two and a half hours before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In fact, I have begun to refer to Capitol Hill as my "home away from home." Sometimes they are more friendly than at others, but they do have a legitimate interest. My top executives tell me they spend about 25 percent of their time dealing with Congress.

I was sitting next to Admiral Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at breakfast this morning. He was saying, "Everyone always thinks the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs has all that time to think, plan, and look into the future, but I'm spending all my time on Capitol Hill."

It is a problem, but we in the Intelligence Community have to recognize that we probably cause that problem by not developing a relationship with Congress in which trust is earned and retained.

Because I know from experience of the need to be absolutely candid with Congress, and the responsibility that intelligence professionals have to protect sources and methods, I have established guidelines governing our dealings with Congress. And I have made it absolutely clear that in dealing with Congress there is no excuse for deception. None at all.

There may be some questions that the Agency officials who brief Congress will have to refer back to me. I have told them how to do this. I have told them to politely demur and to say that we will get back to them. In this way, it often comes to me. Then I take the heat -- whether or not we will answer the question. Sometimes the heat wins out. Sometimes I am able to persuade them that we can solve the problem without unnecessarily putting our sources and methods at risk -- as well as the perception around the world of our ability to protect our sources. But in the process, we will not give half-answers or around-the-corner answers. If there is a problem we will say there is a problem and that we cannot answer the question at this time. And I think it's worth it. I have won some, and I have lost some, but no one has accused me of lying during the past year.

I think tension between Congress and the executive branch will always exist and perhaps it is even healthy, but we will be able to work it out if there is an element of trust in the honesty of the statements that are made.

I firmly believe that the oversight responsibilities exercised by Congress are both necessary and beneficial, and are part of our way of doing business.

There must be a dependable system of oversight and accountability which builds, rather than erodes, trust and confidence between the intelligence officers who have the responsibility to protect the nation's secrets and those who are, after all, the elected representatives of the American people.

There are, however, instances where information pertaining to national security must not be released outside the narrow reach of the congressional oversight committees. This includes information that could jeopardize lives, or information that threatens the means by which we protect ourselves. The disclosure of sophisticated technical systems or cryptographic information alerts a hostile nation to the need to develop countermeasures and can seriously hamper our intelligence collection efforts. In signals intelligence, for example, if one sensitive piece of information is published, it could put an entire intelligence collection system that took years to develop out of use. An enormous amount of time, planning, and money would be required to replace it, and the loss of intelligence collection in the meantime could be formidable.

Not too long ago there was a brief flurry of news stories purporting to be based on classified intelligence -- information indicating that the Soviets had carried out certain military experiments. The stories were largely inaccurate and were attributed to a number of U.S. officials. Some of these officials confirmed the story, one denied it, and yet another corrected the initial story. The statements by these officials served to heighten speculation and to sustain public focus on matters involving highly sensitive U.S. intelligence collection techniques.

After these stories were published, the Soviets took countermeasures which limited our access to this type of intelligence. In short, even though the information discussed by these U.S. officials was incorrect, the net result was a further loss for U.S. intelligence.

Regrettably, some view the Intelligence Community's obligation to protect intelligence sources and methods as a threat to a free press. But I have found that most members of the press are more than willing to cooperate when we have clearly stated the reasons why certain information might jeopardize national interests.

Last fall, a reporter from a major newspaper requested a meeting with Bill Baker, my Public Affairs Director who is here today, to discuss extremely sensitive information that had come into his possession about Middle Eastern terrorism. Bill advised the reporter that without any doubt his information, if published, could endanger a valuable source of intelligence and could result in loss of life. The reporter agreed to withhold the story, and to this day, has not published it.

There have been other instances in which the press has withheld stories or written them in a way that preserved the confidentiality of intelligence sources. This cooperation is a result of the credibility and good faith we have worked to establish with the press, and not unlike what we are trying to do with Congress.

In an interview with Newsweek, I made the point that it is important to realize that in this organization, we are going to have to take risks, but the risks have to be associated with certain kinds of principles -- principles with which the public is comfortable. The risks must not put us afoul of the

Constitution or our laws. I underscore the word "our." Obviously when our officers are operating abroad in hostile climates with laws that would preclude their activities, they cannot function under those laws. But that gives them absolutely no reason to ignore or to be less respectful of, or dedicated to, enforcing and protecting our laws.

We also believe that it is essential that the American people know and understand the role of intelligence and oversight. That's partly why I'm here, because this luncheon is a good opportunity to talk to some of our country's leaders. In addition to maintaining a relationship with the press, CIA officers often speak to academic groups and other organizations.

The challenges that we face -- Third World instability, terrorism, narcotics, technology transfer, and verifying arms agreements -- all argue the necessity of attracting top people into intelligence. We are fortunate in that last year, over 100,000 men and women expressed some degree of interest in working for the Central Intelligence Agency. Qualified applications are coming in at the rate of almost 1,000 per month. You have probably read about the protests on some college campuses when CIA recruits. Interestingly enough, these protests and the publicity they generate often work in our favor. Our recruitment centers are inundated with resumes after campus demonstrations. But we're not responsible for the campus demonstrations.

I mentioned before that in an organization like this, there is a need to take risks. I hope that we continue to attract those best suited to carry out our mission -- we are looking for people who are risk takers but not risk seekers. People who are dedicated and responsive to our law and discipline. People who understand and play by the rules. People to whom fame and fortune

are not particularly a necessary part of their lives, but who can find in our work an avenue to pursue their highest aspirations for a safer and a better world. Our attrition rate suggests that we are winning on this score.

With such people we can continue to provide the intelligence that policymakers need, observing the rules of oversight and accountability that both the Congress and the members of the Intelligence Community have a right to expect. This is what you would want of us, what all American people expect of us, and we are doing our very best to supply it.

Thank you.